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U.S. Funds Community-Based Construction, Agriculture, and Democracy Projects

United States Ambassador Michael S. Owen today signed grant agreements totaling more than USD 135,000 with 14 community organizations. Six of these grants will finance the construction of classrooms, school furniture, bridges, wells, and drying floors through the Ambassador's Special Self-Help (SSH) Program, which supports small, community-based projects. These projects are designed in cooperation with community members, who contribute their own resources, usually in the form of labor and in-kind donations.

“Although small, these projects can have a huge impact on the local economy and quality of life for beneficiaries, said Ambassador Owen. “The income generated by these projects helps participants pay for their children's school fees, meet daily living expenses, and save for the future.”

The Ambassador also inaugurated four grants funded by the United States African Development Foundation (ADF), which invests in the expansion of business enterprises. These projects will increase the productivity and profitability of the agriculture sector by funding food production, food processing, and animal husbandry. In addition, the United States has allocated USD 60,000 worth of grants to Sierra Leone through the Democracy and Human Rights Fund. These resources will support local organizations working to ensure free, fair, and peaceful elections in 2012. They will sponsor public information campaigns promoting voter education and women's participation in the electoral process, as well as a community theater group that will educate the public about conflict prevention during elections.

The Ambassador's Special Self-Help Fund (SSH) is a grass-roots assistance program that allows U.S. embassies to respond directly to local requests for small

community-based development projects in African countries. For more information on the Ambassador's SSH program please visit <http://freetown.usembassy.gov>. The United States African Development Foundation (ADF) is an independent Federal agency established to support African-designed and African-driven solutions that address grassroots economic and social problems. For more information please see <http://usadf.gov/>.